

Health Advisory for Kent County Schools Regarding Swine Flu
April 29, 2009

Dear Kent County school personnel,

The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is closely monitoring reports of swine flu across our nation, and keeping a close eye on possible illness in Kent County. Currently, there are no confirmed cases of swine flu in Kent County. It is reasonably expected that swine flu may crop up in the coming weeks and months in our area. This is not cause for panic or alarm, it is important to be aware of measures that everyone can take to stay healthy and avoid getting sick. Please remind students, teachers, staff, and families of the following infection control measures:

- **Wash your hands:** Washing your hands often with soap and water will help protect you from germs. While not a substitution for proper hand washing, you can also use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cover your cough and sneeze:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your inner elbow when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth:** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Keep your distance:** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too.
- **Stay home when you're sick:** Stay home from school when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness. (This includes teachers and staff.)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has set forth guidelines regarding school dismissal and childcare facility closure. **Here are those guidelines:**

- Dismissal of students should be considered only in schools with a confirmed or a suspected case epidemiologically linked to a confirmed case.
- Decisions regarding broader school dismissal within these communities should be left to local authorities, taking into account the extent of influenza-like illness in the community.
- If the school dismisses students or a childcare facility closes, they should also cancel all school- or childcare-related gatherings.
- Schools and childcare facilities should dismiss students for a time period to be evaluated on an ongoing basis depending upon epidemiological findings.
- Schools and childcare facilities should consult with their local or state health departments for guidance on reopening. If no additional confirmed or suspected cases are identified among students (or school personnel) for a period of 7 days, schools may consider reopening.
- Schools and childcare facilities in unaffected areas should begin to prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or childcare facility closure.

In addition, I'd like to emphasize the importance of weekly illness reporting at your school. The health department uses your school's data to track the severity and frequency of illnesses in our

community. Your school's information alerts us potential outbreaks. We also report this information to the Michigan Department of Community Health where it is used to track illness on a state-wide basis. *If we begin to see cases of swine flu in Michigan, this data will be crucial to halting the spread of illness.* Simply visit <https://www.accesskent.com/SchoolReporting/> to log on and report. New users will need to register before logging in. If you need help navigating the system, please feel free to contact the Kent County Health Department at (616) 632-7228.

Finally, you will find resources, including a swine flu fact sheet, information in English and Spanish, and the latest news from the CDC at www.accesskent.com/swineflu.

Thank you for making health and well-being a priority.

Sincerely,

Cathy Raevsky
Administrative Health Officer